

Women's Labor in Rural Areas of Adana

-Focusing on seasonal agricultural workers-

Sachiko Hoshiyama

Kinjo-Gakuin University (part-time lecturer) 26 Tsuyuhashi-cho, Nakagawa-ku, Nagoya 454-0028, JAPAN
e-mail: kiziltepe@nifty.com

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze seasonal agricultural workers with the focus of gender relations in agriculture in Adana¹. In Turkey, 75.6% of female working population is hired in the agricultural sector in the year of 2000. While numbers of seasonal agricultural workers are limited, they have become indispensable for cultivations of such crops as cotton, watermelon, citrus, sugar beat, potato, and so on in Adana. It can be said that it is one of the features of agriculture in Adana that farmers cultivate cash crops through hiring seasonal agricultural workers during busy seasons, most of whom come from Southeast Anatolia (SEA) Region in Turkey. And also, I would like to point out that one of the reasons why lots of seasonal agricultural workers come from the SEA Region to Adana is that there had been the Turkish governmental policy for protecting economic resources of people living in relatively undeveloped regions such as the SEA Region until the government gave permissions that farmers purchase cotton picking machines in 2004.

Regarding divisions of labor between women and men which are remarkable in Turkish agriculture, women do manual labor and are hired as casual laborer, which means their contract with farmers is not based on a long-term contract. And women's labor is regarded as cheap labor. Additionally, most of female seasonal workers are uneducated and illiteracy rates of women are

higher than that of men. That is to say, divisions of labor between men and women in agriculture are deeply related to norms, tradition, or culture in Turkey (Morvaridi, 1993).

2. Women's labor in agriculture

Table.1 shows employed population in agriculture by sex in Turkey.

Table 1 Employed Population in Agriculture by Sex in Turkey(1970-2000)

Year	Females	Males	Total
1970	50.8%	49.2%	100.0%
1975	46.9%	53.1%	100.0%
1980	53.6%	46.4%	100.0%
1985	53.5%	46.5%	100.0%
1990	55.0%	45.0%	100.0%
2000	56.7%	43.3%	100.0%

Source: 1990 Census of Population, pp.16-17.
2000 Census of Population, p.55.

According to this, it is apparent that women engage in agriculture more than men in number and especially from 1975 proportion of women employed in agriculture has gradually increased. Thus, feminization of agriculture in number has been seen in Turkey (The World Bank, 1993). Whereas, it is also pointed out that most of women are employed as unpaid family labor (90.1% in 2000)². This means men do almost all the administrative works and manage farms while women do supplementary duties. And according to data from employed population by economic activity, most of women's employed population (75.6%) is hired in the agricultural sector in the year of 2000 whereas proportion of

¹ I had made fieldwork for five months in 1996 and in 1997 regarding seasonal workers of picking cotton in Adana, Turkey. And also I had an opportunity to visit villages in Adana in September 2004 as preresearch of the ICCAP project.

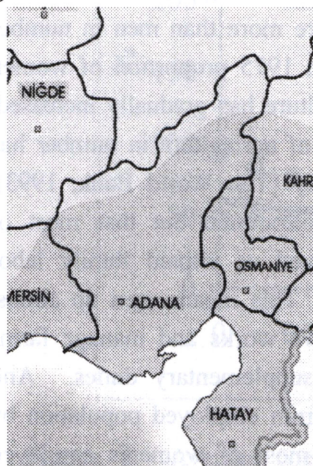
² The author calculated from the data of 2000 Census of Population, pp.196-197.

men working in agriculture is 32.9%. On the other hand, proportion of men working in the service sector is 42.8% whereas that of women is 17.4% in the same year³.

Additionally, there are many disparities among women in rural areas caused by mechanization and capitalization of agriculture in Turkey (Özbay 1985). Some women of families who have enough income to employ workers become housewives, released from most of their duties in villages (Maimaiti, 2004). And there are other women who help husbands or fathers working on fields as well as doing household work. The other women whose families do not own enough land to feed family members or any land at all work as agricultural workers. Furthermore, by making extra income, some women make cash crops like vegetables for markets or weave carpets, etc.

In Adana as well, 70.8% of total employed female population is working in agriculture in 2000 whereas 28.8% of that of men. And, in Adana, 31.2% of women working in agriculture are illiterate whereas 10.5 % of that of men. This means there are disparities of educational background between women and men, which I think interrelate with employed status of them in agriculture.

Figure 1 Climate Belts in Adana



Source: *Türkiye Coğrafya Atlası*

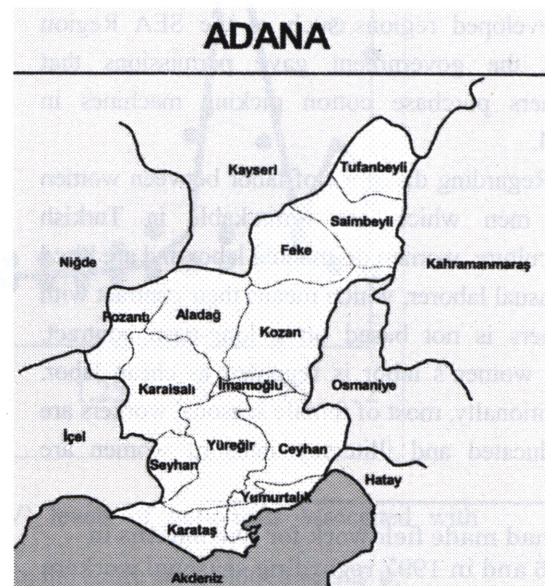
- : Central Anatolia Inland Climate
- : Mediterranean Climate

3. Seasonal workers on the Seyhan River basin in Adana

Usages of seasonal workers are different according to cultivated crops, which are determined by climate, soil fertility, water use, labor supply and so on. In Figure 1, we would see two different climate regions, one is south of Adana which is located on the Mediterranean climate belt and another is north of Adana on the Central Anatolia Inland climate belt.

Whereas the north is included exclusively in Tufanbeyli district (Figure 2), the south of Adana is divided into eight different administrative districts (Seyhan, Yüreğir, Karataş, Karaisalı, Pozantı, Aladağ, Feke and Saimbeyli) where more than half of their total land areas are situated on the Seyhan River basin. Out of these eight districts, there are three districts (Seyhan, Yüreğir and Karataş) containing the same features that in more than half of villages double crop cultivations are made and more than half of cultivated areas are irrigated⁴.

Figure 2 Districts in Adana



Source: 1997 Köy Enventeri: 01 Adana

³, 2000 Census of Population p.55.

⁴ 1997 Köy Enventeri: 01 Adana, p.28, p.41.

Table 2 Area, Production, and Yield of Wheat
in selected districts of Adana (2002)

Districts	Area (ha)	Production (ton)	Yield (kg/ha)
Seyhan	10000	53500	5350
Yüreğir	65000	304500	4511
Karataş	15600	62400	4000
Tufanbeyli	15700	42390	2700

Source: *Adana Tarım Master Planı (Adana Agriculture Master Plan)*, p.105.

In addition, it seems that features of seasonal workers would become clear in terms of comparing two different parts of Adana, the lower and the upper basins of the Seyhan River. That is to say, in the districts of Seyhan, Yüreğir and Karataş on the lower basin of the same river, 71.7% of total cultivated area is irrigated and 28.3% of that is rain-fed. On the other hand, in Tufanbeyli on the upper basin of it 19.3% of total cultivated area is irrigated and 80.7% of that is rain-fed according to village survey in 1997.

As for productivity of agriculture, there seem quite differences between the lower and the upper basins of the river as yield of wheat in Tufanbeyli is quite lower than yields in other districts in the south of Adana (Table 2).

3-1. Lower basin of the Seyhan River

On the lower basin of the Seyhan River, cotton has been one of the most important crops in agriculture and a lot of seasonal workers are hired in cotton farms. In cotton cultivation, women are hired exclusively in hoeing and thinning out and harvesting, picking cotton. In irrigated areas, cotton of 1st crop is hoed and thinned out from April to May and harvested from September to November. And cotton of 2nd crop is hoed and thinned out from June to July and harvested from September to November. In rain-fed areas, cotton is harvested from the end of August to October. Harvesting cotton is labor intensive work because in Adana all of cotton has been picked one by one by hand until 2004⁵.

⁵ In 2004, several farmers started using cotton picking machines in stead of hiring

And cotton has to be picked as soon as cotton balls open because quality of cotton would be damaged if cotton becomes damp due to rainfall after cotton balls open. And so, during the harvesting season from the end of August to November, more than 100 thousand seasonal agricultural workers used to be hired at least until 1996.

According to data which I obtained from Labor Placement Office in Adana, 145000 seasonal workers are hired by farmers of cotton, out of which 100575 seasonal workers come from outside of the Adana province and the rest from inside the Adana province in 1996. And the same data show that the province from where seasonal agricultural workers come to Adana the most is Şanlıurfa province (40.3% of those who come from outside of Adana) in the SEA Region. In 1997, numbers of seasonal workers from outside of Adana are dropped to 49500 and total numbers of seasonal workers hired in Adana become smaller than 100 thousand (91225) in the same year⁶. It could be said that nearly 25000 to 30000 workers might be hired for picking cotton in Adana in 2003, according to my estimation in terms of statistical data of 2003 and interviews with farmers in 2004.

According to Table3, cultivated area of cotton in Adana has gradually decreased from 108614ha in 1990 to 38717ha in 2003.

seasonal agricultural workers in Adana as the Turkish government gave permissions to utilize those machines.

⁶ The numbers from the Labor Placement Office in Adana are calculated from the numbers which mediators (*elciler* in Turkish) reported to this office. And an official in charge told me in 1997 that actual numbers of seasonal workers would be about 10% more than these numbers because there are some mediators who do not report at all. I think that these numbers are efficient to a certain extent as they are compatible with annual data regarding area and production of cotton cultivated in Adana and also there are not any other data about seasonal agricultural migrate workers.

Table3 Area, Production and Yield of Cotton
in Adana (1980, 1990-2003)

Year	Area (ha)	Production (ton)	Yield (kg/ha)
1980	200000	390900	1950
1990	108614	245796	2263
1991	98535	234525	2380
1992	124000	304945	2452
1993	76155	158758	2085
1994	80043	212330	2653
1995	139121	366401	2634
1996	121235	304945	2515
1997	77712	215438	2772
1998	83189	226463	2722
1999	46375	129120	2784
2000	44926	142718	3177
2001	61860	209605	3388
2002	55012	195029	3545
2003	38717	168578	4354

Source: A.Celil Saygın et al., *Pamuk Raporu*.P.116.

One of the reasons why cultivated area of cotton in Adana has decreased is the change of cropping patterns. That is to say, double crop cultivations such as wheat and soybean, wheat and maize, wheat and groundnut, wheat and rice, wheat and sesame have become more profitable than monoculture of cotton⁷. Another reason of that is shortage of workers from the SEA Region, where since the latter half of the 1990's cotton cultivation has increased due to development project called the Southeastern Anatolia Project (SEAP).

Table4 shows annual data of area and production of cotton in the Şanlıurfa province from where workers mostly used to come to Adana. After the construction of the Atatürk dam and large part of rain-fed area has become irrigated since 1992, area and production of cotton have been increased. In 2002 cotton was cultivated in area of 177500ha, which is almost three times larger than 1990. Production has been increased more rapidly from 69290 tons in 1990 to 252330 tons in 2002.

⁷ *Adana Tarım Master Planı*, p.114.

Table4 Area, Production and Yield of Cotton
in Şanlıurfa (1990-2002)

Year	Area (ha)	Production (tons)	Yield (kg/ha)
1990	63233	69290	1096
1991	51528	41944	814
1992	56679	41000	723
1993	62375	63950	1025
1994	67329	71097	1056
1995	91920	105524	1148
1996	109893	126951	1155
1997	123393	152609	1237
1998	152659	186359	1221
1999	174934	179800	1028
2000	179300	254602	1420
2001	157200	219414	1396
2002	177500	252330	1422

Source: *Agricultural Structure: Production, Price, Value (1990-2002)*

3-2 Gender relations of seasonal agricultural workers on the lower basin

In Adana, picking cotton is considered as feminine work as people say "it is ashamed that men pick cotton." Such discourse does not encourage men to work and pick cotton in spite of that a lot of men come to Adana with their female family members as agricultural workers.

In 1996 and 1997 I made interviews with 51 agricultural worker families in which 69.7% of female family members (136 out of total 195 female members) and 58.2% of male members (99 out of total 170 male members) participated in picking cotton. The reasons why numbers of women exceeded male numbers deeply related with their traditions and norms. That is to say in cotton fields women can work at segregated places where there is almost no risk to be watched by male strangers and men can take control of women of their families. And high illiteracy rate of women in the SEA Region (39.1% in 2000) also makes women work at lower wages than that of men, which lets women work as agricultural seasonal workers as well (Hoshiyama, 1993).

Table5 shows illiteracy rates in Turkey and the SEA Region. Since 1950 illiteracy rates of men

and women have been decreased. Although illiteracy of women in SEA Region is still much higher than that of women in Turkey and that of men in the same region, it is improved exceedingly (16.1 points), from 55.2% in 1990 to 39.1% in 2000.

As for improvements of women's status in the SEA Region, the Turkish government promotes women's education in the SEA region through campaigns of encouraging girls to go to elementary schools, called "girls, to school" by collaboration with UNICEF. And social education centers called ÇATOM provide women with opportunities to learn some skills to generate income as well as literacy education for adults⁸.

4. Conclusions

Cash crop cultivations in Adana depend much on seasonal agricultural workers, most of who come from the SEA Region. And majority of seasonal workers are women. One of the reasons why women work as agricultural workers is that women have relatively lower education than men especially in the SEA Region. For farmers of cotton, labor supply from the SEA Region has been one of the urgent problems they face because of enlarging cotton farming in the SEA Region since the latter half of the 1990's.

In the 1990's, women's illiteracy rate in the SEA Region was decreased much more than that of the previous years due to some governmental policies. If women's education continues to be improved and more and more women begin to work in other sectors than agriculture, it would be possible to say farmers cultivating cash crops in Adana have much more difficulty to find seasonal agricultural workers from SEA Region in the future.

⁸ ÇATOM means "multi-purpose community centers for women", which have provided local women with services since 1995. And there are 22 centers in the SEA Region as of the end of 1999.
(<http://www.gapturkiye.gen.tr/english/social/>)

Table5. Illiteracy Rates of Men and Women
in Turkey (1950–2000)(%)

Year	Turkey		SEA Region	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
1950	80.6	54.5	94.2	77.8
1955	74.4	44.1	93.1	70.5
1960	75.2	46.4	93.0	70.1
1965	67.1	35.9	89.5	60.3
1970	58.2	29.7	84.2	52.4
1975	49.5	23.8	76.1	43.2
1980	45.3	20.0	75.7	38.6
1985	31.8	13.5	60.3	28.0
1990	28.0	11.2	55.2	24.4
2000	19.4	6.1	39.1	14.0

Source: 2000 Census of Population, pp.88-89.

SEAP Provincial Statistics 1950-1994, p.10.

5. Further study hereafter

Features of female seasonal labors in Tufanbeyli on the upper basin of the Seyhan River seem quite different from those on the lower basin. In Tufanbeyli women work as agricultural seasonal workers on fields of potato, sugar beat, chickpea, and bean and female seasonal workers are from in-village workers or workers from neighbor villages.

Furthermore, there are disparities of wages and work between men and women in Tufanbeyli. Women work for 12million TL/day and men work for 15 million TL/day as seasonal agricultural workers in 2004. As for division of labor, women dig out and collect potatoes and men put them into bags and close mouths of bags for harvesting. One of villagers said to me, "men's duties are much heavier (and more important) than those of women." Meanwhile, women gain extra income to weave carpets such that carpet weaving is regarded as the third most important income resource at eight out of thirty villages in Tufanbeyli in 1997⁹.

Women have played important roles in agriculture not only by numbers they engage in but also by maintaining labor supply especially for cash crop cultivations. And it depends on what degree women in farmers' families engage in agriculture and family subsistence or whether

⁹ 1997 Köy Enventeri: 01 Adana, pp.86-87.

farmers continue to keep their livestock or not as it were women that take care of their livestock daily.

Therefore, through investigating women's labor in agriculture and importance of women's income for family budgets, farmers' response against changes of crop patterns due to future climate change would be delineated more clearly. For further study, through making fieldwork in Tufanbeyli where it can be more vulnerable than the lower Seyhan basin because rain-fed farming is more prevalent than irrigated farming it would be possible to analyze if women's enrolment in agriculture and water use make farms more vulnerable to climate change or not. Additionally, focusing on women's capabilities, it will be polemical whether gender relations in rural areas like villages in Tufanbeyli would be transformed by changing cropping patterns due to climate change.

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